



**(Intro Slide)**



**In a world that treats marriage like it is only another level of romantic expression or a prelude to a blow-out reception . . .**

**-- . . . what would happen if we took “cutting a covenant” more literally, like God did with Abraham in Genesis 15.**

**-- What if there were dead animals, cut in half, on either side of the aisle?**

**-- What if the bride and groom walked through and so portrayed that they were SO committing to the covenant that they were willing to have the same done to them, as to the animals, if they violate the terms of the covenant?**

**-- That certainly would change the tone of a wedding, wouldn't it?**

**TR: Cutting a covenant, like our contemporary phrase, “cutting a contract”, is serious. And so it was at the end of Nehemiah 9.**

Because of all this we make **a firm covenant in writing**; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests.

ESV

### READ SLIDE

-- [all this] is the revival brought about by the mercies of God as the people responded to His loving discipline.

-- [all this] is the coming back to life, the RE-VIVING, that included a profound hunger for the Word of God and a quick obedience to the commands of God.

-- And so, a covenant was cut. Most of chapter 10 includes the names of those who signed it.

TR: And, in case you think the “cutting a covenant” image is a bit harsh, look down to 10:29

**Nehemiah 10:29**

. . . join with their brothers, their nobles, and **enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law** that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and his rules and his statutes.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- It wasn't just a promise with blessings.
- It was also an obligation to be cursed if the covenant clauses were violated.
  
- What can we learn from this historical description of what followed the revival?
- What do we need to learn about taking the great moments of renewal in our walks with God into our weekdays, day after day?

**TR: First, we see that . . .**



... we must **SOLIDIFY** revival.

**TR:** And the way to do that is ...

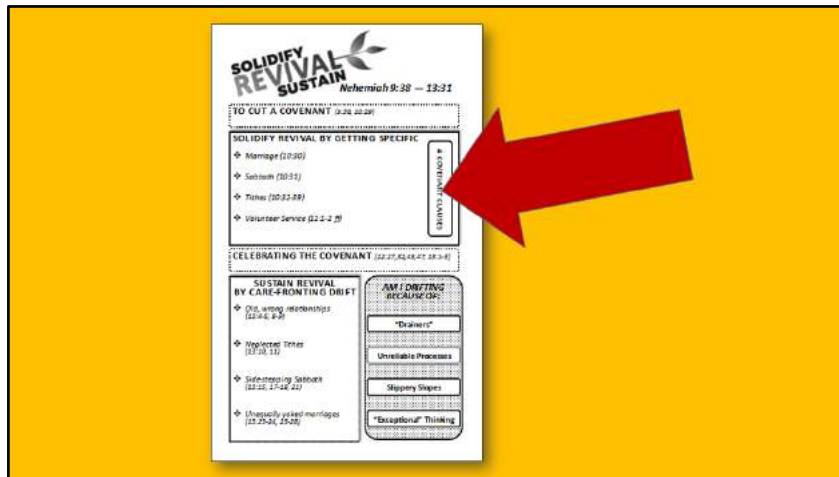


. . . by getting specific.

-- They say revivals don't last. But neither do baths, but it is good to take one, isn't it?

-- We can extend the impact of the Holy Spirit's RE-VIVING work by getting specific.

TR: In our sermon notes . . .



... we now look at the first of the two main points.

TR: Revival must be ...



### READ SLIDE

- As 2 Corinthians 7:10 says, “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”
- Tears are good, just not enough.
- If you are someone who has been repeatedly hurt by someone else over time . . . you want to see more than insincere crocodile tears.

TR: When we get specific we can write something down, remembering that . . .





**READ SLIDE**

-- This seems especially true for men. Vague promises to be nicer, more thoughtful, etc. often yield no solidified change over time.

-- Most men respond best to specific coaching, not generalized cheerleading.

**TR: How did Nehemiah press the revived people of God to get specific? First, we read in 10:30 . . .**


**Nehemiah 10:30**

**We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.**

*ESV*

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Covenant clause number one was about their . . .**



**SOLIDIFY  
REVIVAL**

*Revival must be solidified  
by getting specific, not just emotional*

❖ **Marriages**

**READ SLIDE**

- This is about who they marry **AND** about the ultimate goals of their marriages.
- Namely, to honor God and to raise godly offspring.

**TR: The next specific is found in verse 31**

**Nehemiah 10:31**


And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on **the Sabbath or on a holy day**. And we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: The second covenant clause was about their keeping the .**

..



*Revival must be solidified  
by getting specific, not just emotional*

- ❖ Marriages
- ❖ Sabbath

### READ SLIDE

- This is about honoring God with their time. It is giving God first place in their calendars.
- It is about expressing a practical trust that He will take care of them and they don't need to be workaholics.
- It is about treating others who work for them, both human and animal, with kindness and compassion.

TR: The third specific is referred to in verse 32

**Nehemiah 10:32**

We also take on ourselves the obligation to give yearly a third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God:

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: If you let your eyes skim the next paragraph, you see the obligation of the covenant included . . .**


**Excerpts from Nehemiah 10:35-39**

**We obligate ourselves to bring the firstfruits . . . firstborn . . . tithes . . . We will not neglect the house of our God.**

*ESV*

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: We can summarize the third covenant clause as being about their . . .**



*Revival must be solidified  
by getting specific, not just emotional*

- ❖ Marriages
- ❖ Sabbath
- ❖ Tithes

### **READ SLIDE**

-- This is all about recognizing that God is the owner of all we have, money and possessions and even our children.

-- In the OT there were three tithes, that amounted to about 23% of a person's income.

-- For us, the concept of the tithe is never repudiated. We should be honoring God with the first 10% of our income and then blessing Him with our freewill offerings on top of that.

TR: The last specific of the covenant, though I don't think it was written up in the same document, is found in the opening verses of chapter 11



**Nehemiah 11:1-2**


Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns.  
<sup>2</sup>And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

-- Most of the rest of the chapter honors the names of those who covenanted to move into Jerusalem, in order to solidify what God had done.

TR: The fourth covenant clause relates to what I call . . .



**SOLIDIFY  
REVIVAL**

*Revival must be solidified  
by getting specific, not just emotional*

- ❖ Marriages
- ❖ Sabbath
- ❖ Tithes
- ❖ Volunteer Service

**READ SLIDE**

-- It may be that some were drafted to move and others volunteered to move.

-- The sacrifice of our time, serving the kingdom of God, is often more difficult than just giving our money.

TR: So, in order to make the effects of revival continue, we see modeled that we must first . . .



**READ SLIDE**

**TR: This specific covenant, with its specific clauses, was so important that a huge celebration was planned.**

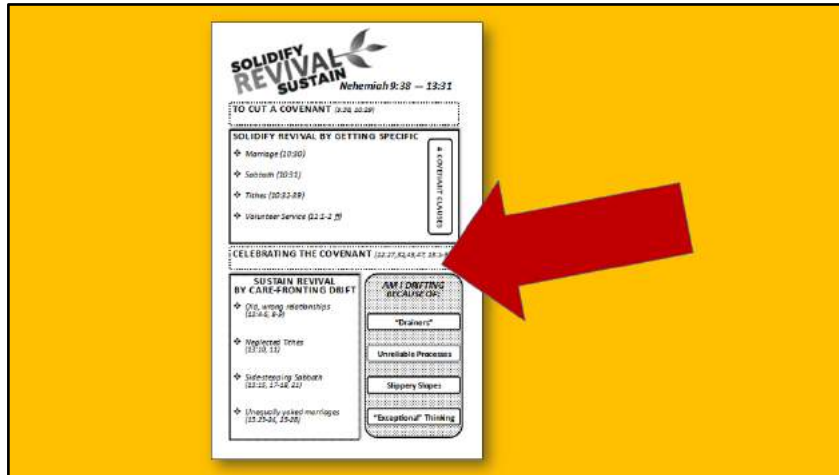


**It was a celebration of God's mercies.**

**-- It made solemn and yet joyous proclamation of the life that God had RE-VIVED in His people.**

**-- Just like a wedding should be special, a big deal even if not an expensive one, so that we proclaim and celebrate the importance of the covenant vows being taken.**

**TR: In our notes . . .**



... we spend a few moments looking at the connective thread between our two main points.

TR: Turn to Nehemiah 12:27

**Nehemiah 12:27**

And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem **to celebrate the dedication with gladness**, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres.

ESV

**After all the names of the volunteers in chapter 11, and the historical genealogy of the priests in the verses of chapter 12 leading up to this point . . .**

**-- . . . we read . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: This was a huge event, with . . .**

**Nehemiah 12:32a**

Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed **two great choirs** that gave thanks.

ESV

**. . . all the leaders and two great choirs.**

**-- Lots of instruments**

**TR: and also worshipful . . .**

**Nehemiah 12:43**

And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, **for God had made them rejoice with great joy**; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

ESV

**. . . sacrifices.  
-- READ SLIDE**

**TR: This ceremony was about rejoicing but also about “setting apart.” Look down to the beginning of chapter 13**



**Nehemiah 13:1b-3**

. . . found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, <sup>2</sup>for they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them—yet our God turned the curse into a blessing. <sup>3</sup>As soon as the people heard the law, they **separated** from Israel all those of foreign descent. ESV

**READ SLIDE**

-- Why the big celebration?

-- Out of joy but also to help us underline in our hearts the importance of the covenant made to solidify the revival.

-- Cf. the importance of the covenant in a wedding . . . everything else pales in comparison.

TR: Thus the revival was solidified by getting specific and the result was . . .



**. . . fresh and beautiful.**

**-- Specific covenant clauses . . . significant celebratory worship .**

**. . it was wonderful.**

**TR: So, what went wrong?**



**How did the fresh and beautiful become wilted and dried out?**

**TR: The precipitating event to these horrific changes is found in 13:6**

**Nehemiah 13:6**

While this was taking place, **I was not in Jerusalem**, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went to the king. And after some time I asked leave of the king . . .

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- Nehemiah had to leave for a time.
- We don't really know how long but long enough for something to take the VIVE out of the revival.

**TR: This wonderful historical account is so honest, it shows us that not only must we solidify revival, we must . . .**



**. . . sustain it.**

**TR: And to do so, we must . . .**

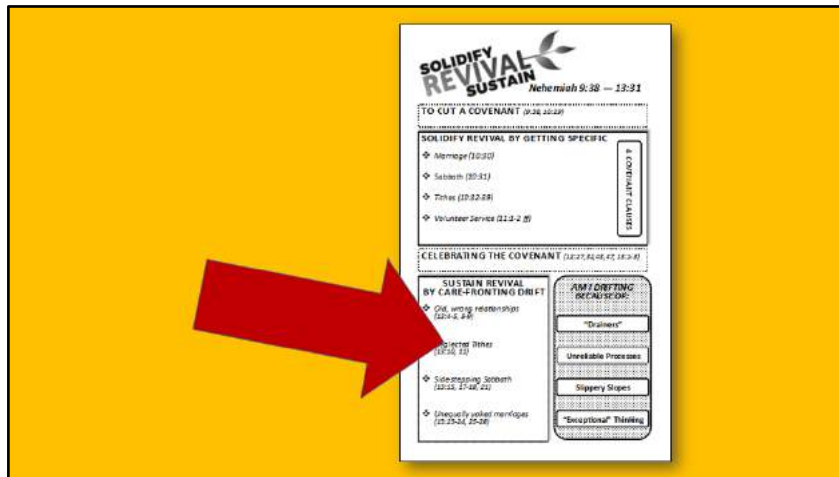


. . . care-front drift.

-- We can call it mission drift, values drift, or even covenant drift . . .

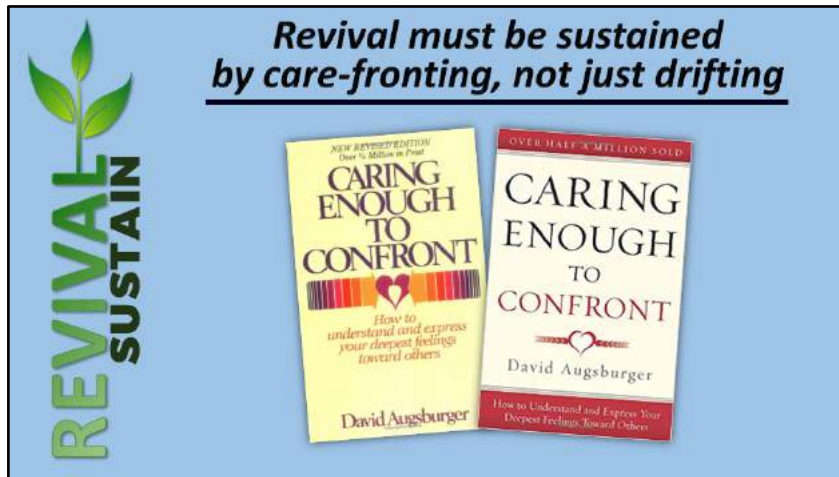
-- . . . but in any case, we need to care-enough to confront it.

TR: In our notes we move to . . .



... the second of our two main points.

TR: Revival must be ...



... READ SLIDE

-- [care-fronting] is a term I learned long ago from David Augsburger.

-- No matter what version of his book we read, the key is that we care enough to confront . . .

-- . . . hence, "care-front."

-- What did Nehemiah do when he got back to Jerusalem and found the petals falling off the blossom of revival? He care-fronted.

TR: What did he confront? Look at 13:4



**Nehemiah 13:4-5a**

Now before this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was related to Tobiah, <sup>5</sup>prepared for Tobiah a large chamber where they had previously put the grain offering . . .

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- Tobiah was not one of the people of God and he certainly was not a priest.
- He was one of the tormenting trio that caused so many problems earlier.
- But Eliashib made space for him in the Temple, displacing where they had put the grain offering given by the worshippers.

**TR: Nehemiah found this drifting back into . . .**



*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

❖ Old, wrong relationships

**READ SLIDE**

- How sad to go back to what we used to know, even though we had changed.
- It is so hard for folks who come to Christ and then go home from camp to a bunch of ungodly friends.
- It is hard when we get married but then do not really forsake all others.

**TR: His response? Down in verse 8.**

**Nehemiah 13:8-9**

And **I was very angry**, and I threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber. <sup>9</sup>Then I gave orders, and they cleansed the chambers, and I brought back there the vessels of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

ESV

**READ SLIDE****TR: How did Nehemiah sustain a revival . . . by . . .**



. . . care-fronting old, wrong relationships.

-- Are there ways we are making space for people who should not have any place in our lives anymore?

-- I'm not talking about fellow-Christians, especially within the local church with whom we should be in a covenant of fellowship.

-- Rather, those old, wrong relationships that drag us back into current away from God, not toward Him.

TR: Nehemiah found more evidence of drift. Verse 10.

**Nehemiah 13:10**

I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them, so that the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had fled each to his field.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- Around the world, many ministers have to be bi-vocational. The people don't have the resources to support them.
- But, when those resources are there, but their hands don't want to put them into the offering box, there's a problem.
- EX: pastor friend went bi-vocational but the church's outreach suffered. Here they had to go back to their fields.

**TR: The people had drifted into the eddy of . . .**



*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

- ❖ Old, wrong relationships
- ❖ Neglected tithes

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Nehemiah cared enough to do something. Verse 11.**

Nehemiah 13:11

**So I confronted** the officials and said,  
"Why is the house of God forsaken?"  
And I gathered them together and set  
them in their stations.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: How did Nehemiah sustain the revival? By . . .**



*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

- ❖ Old, wrong relationships
- ❖ Neglected tithes

**CARE-FRONTED**

. . . care-fronting.

-- The book of Malachi teaches that to withhold the tithe is to rob God, it belongs to Him.

-- Yet, it is easy to drift into thinking that we are doing something special if we give “that much.”

TR: A third evidence of covenant drift is found in verse 15



**Nehemiah 13:15**

In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses **on the Sabbath**, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem **on the Sabbath day**. And I warned them on the day when they sold food.

ESV

**READ SLIDE****TR: He found the people . . .**



*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

- ❖ Old, wrong relationships
- ❖ Neglected tithes
- ❖ Side-stepping Sabbath

### READ SLIDE

-- The honoring of God by keeping one day a week holy is what some historians believe kept the nation of Israel together through the atrocities that they have faced.

-- But, like speeding down the highway by “just following the traffic,” we easily lose our distinctiveness as the people of God.

-- The movie Chariots of Fire tell of a time when a man would forego a probable Olympic gold to keep his covenant to make one day a week special. Many today seem to think they have done God a favor by going to church for an hour.

TR: Nehemiah cared too much to just look the other way or pretend it wasn't happening. Verse 17

**Nehemiah 13:17-18**

**Then I confronted** the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? <sup>18</sup>Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: He didn't just confront the Jewish folks but also dealt with those who outside the people of God. Look at verse 21**

Nehemiah 13:21

**But I warned** them and said to them, "Why do you lodge outside the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you." From that time on they did not come on the Sabbath.

ESV

44

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Nehemiah . . .**



*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

- ❖ Old, wrong relationships
- ❖ Neglected tithes
- ❖ Side-stepping Sabbath

**CARE-FRONTED**

. . . care-fronted the drift.

TR: When Nehemiah returned from his trip he found lots of evidence of drift. Each one serious. The fourth one is referenced in v. 23.

**Nehemiah 13:23-24**

In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. <sup>24</sup>And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but only the language of each people.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

-- Several times in Nehemiah's account we read of the need to separate, specifically from the Ammonites and Moabites.  
-- Elsewhere in the OT, Ruth is certainly an example of a Moabite woman who converted, so it is not just where you are from but your very world-view.

TR: The evidence of drift that had been addressed, as all had been, in the firm covenant of chapter 10, was . . .



*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

- ❖ Old, wrong relationships
- ❖ Neglected tithes
- ❖ Side-stepping Sabbath
- ❖ Unequally yoked marriages

**READ SLIDE**

-- The impact was not just on the husband or wife, but on the children!

TR: What did Nehemiah do? You can probably guess by now.  
He . . .

**Nehemiah 13:25**

**And I confronted** them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair. And I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves."

ESV

. . . care-fronted them.

-- READ SLIDE

-- This is so vital that things even get a bit violent.

-- Remember, this is a honest narrative. It is **DESCRIPTIVE**, not necessarily **PRESCRIPTIVE**.

**TR:** That is, the hair pulling is not prescriptive. The opposition to unequally yoked marriages is.



**Nehemiah 13:26**

**“Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin.”**

ESV

**It applied to a great king, like Solomon.  
-- And when he drifted from the value, even he was made to sin.**

**TR: Verse 27**

**Nehemiah 13:27**

“Shall we then listen to you and do all **this great evil and act treacherously** against our God by marrying foreign women?”

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- It seems that these folks were trying to make a case that it is OK to marry outside the faith.
- Nehemiah calls it as it is: “a great evil and a treacherous act.”

**TR:** And on top of all this, **EVEN** the high priest’s family was caught in the current, taking their boat to the rocks.

**Nehemiah 13:28**

And one of the sons of Jehoiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. Therefore **I chased him** from me.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- Sanballat was one of the tormenting trio that caused so much trouble earlier in Nehemiah's account.
- The high priest's son had married Sanballat's daughter.

**TR: Nehemiah chased him away . . . he . . .**



*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

- ❖ Old, wrong relationships
- ❖ Neglected tithes
- ❖ Side-stepping Sabbath
- ❖ Unequally yoked marriages

**CARE-FRONTED**

... care-fronted.

-- As a church we have attempted to deal with the danger of drifting by setting policies, which all begin with value statements.

-- It is the values that must not be violated. The procedures can change.

-- But, just setting policies does not mean that one lives by them. We must care enough about the values that we will have the courage to do something more than pull out our own hair.

-- We live in a day when individualism says, "Who are you to confront me with my inconsistency?"

-- Within the church, we must be wary of drift, first in our lives and then in the lives of our brothers and sisters.

**-- Even the covenant of church membership is minimized today. Though what we need are people who care enough about our souls that they won't just leave when things get a bit messy. They will care-front us and we them . . . until we all make it safely home to glory.**

**TR: Let's take these insights and broaden them beyond the four covenant clauses they wrote up.**

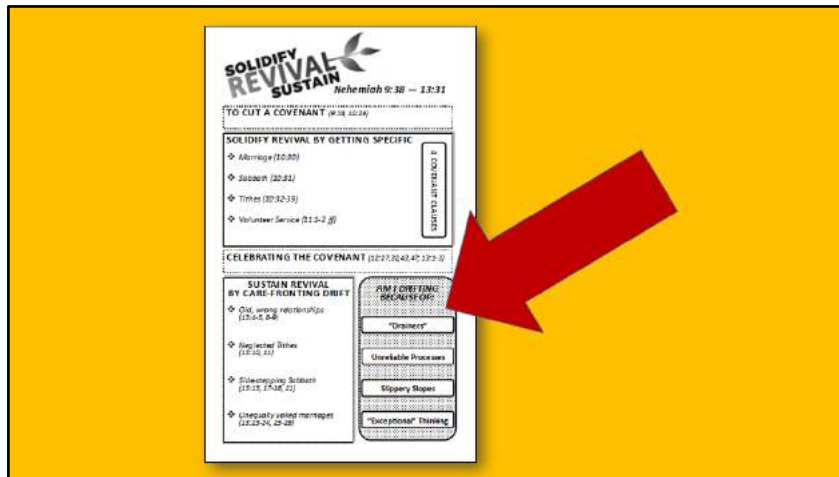


*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

- ❖ Old, wrong relationships
- ❖ Neglected tithes
- ❖ Side-stepping Sabbath
- ❖ Unequally yoked marriages

**These four things, all addressed to one level or another in the covenant made in chapter 10, also give us a historical example of tendencies in our drifting, even if not in these specific areas.**

**TR: Let's consider what the breaking of these four covenant clauses can teach us.**



**In our notes we are looking at these four winds of drift.**  
**-- Note that the four are directly addressed back in the first main point . . . the clauses of the covenant that was made.**  
**-- Because the covenant was SPECIFIC, Nehemiah could take a bearing and say, “YOU DRIFTED.”**

**TR: Are we drifting because of . . .**



*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

- ❖ Old, wrong relationships
  - *Drainers*
- ❖ Neglected tithes
- ❖ Side-stepping Sabbath
- ❖ Unequally yoked marriages

### **DRAINERS in our lives?**

-- First, we learn that there is great danger in allowing the **DRAINERS** to have a prominent place in our lives.

-- Can and should we have non-Christian friends? **Yes.**

-- Should they be the ones from whom we seek the undergirding we need to sustain revival? **No.**

-- In the same way, we need to be careful about giving a place in the temple of our hearts to the world's philosophies seen in books and movies.

**TR: We need to also learn that . . .**





*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

- ❖ Old, wrong relationships
  - *Drainers*
- ❖ Neglected tithes
  - *Unreliable Processes*
- ❖ Side-stepping Sabbath
- ❖ Unequally yoked marriages

. . . unreliable processes lead to good intentions with no follow-through impact.

-- Note: Nehemiah appointed RELIABLE people to oversee the collection and distribution of tithes.

-- In the handling of finances, personally and as a church, we must keep careful records.

-- We dare not trust that “We FEEL generous.”

-- Are we drifting because we have not set up a specific way, a RELIABLE way, to follow through?

-- Our word must be our bond not just something we say.

TR: We are warned, thirdly, of the danger of . . .



*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

- ❖ Old, wrong relationships
  - *Drainers*
- ❖ Neglected tithes
  - *Unreliable Processes*
- ❖ Side-stepping Sabbath
  - *Slippery Slopes*
- ❖ Unequally yoked marriages

... slippery slopes. Like with the side-stepping of the Sabbath.  
 -- Perhaps it started with foreigners bringing their goods ...  
 then buying for convenience sake ... to allowing some ... then  
 to allowing all.  
 -- When it comes to how we spend our time, mission creep in  
 inevitable if we are NOT intentional.  
 -- Compromise always starts little ... and then grows.  
 -- Have we started to drift because of a little compromise?  
 Does this slippery slope need to be care-fronted?

TR: Finally, we are made aware of the drift into ...



*Revival must be sustained  
by care-fronting, not just drifting*

- ❖ Old, wrong relationships
  - *Drainers*
- ❖ Neglected tithes
  - *Unreliable Processes*
- ❖ Side-stepping sabbath
  - *Slippery Slopes*
- ❖ Unequally yoked marriages
  - *“Exceptional” Thinking*

... “exceptional” thinking.

-- How often do we consider ourselves EXCEPTIONS to the rules?

-- The high priest thought he was. Solomon thought he was.

-- Do we think we are?

-- Are we tempted to drift into thinking that we can handle violating God’s commandments?

-- They don’t really apply to us or to our specific situation?

TR: May I boil all this down to two questions?



**Where do I need to SOLIDIFY by being SPECIFIC.**

**-- READ SLIDE**

**-- More specific in a covenant of change.**

**-- EX: of Curt Finch teaching me that hard conversations need to be captured in writing or people often don't hear.**

**-- EX: Men who want to change . . . write it down, I take a picture, and I set a date on my calendar to bring it back to them.**

**-- EX: With teenagers . . . write it down . . . specifically . . . so that you don't end up with, "That's not how I remember it."**

**TR: The second key question . . .**



**Where do I need to SUSTAIN revival by CARE-FRONTING?**

**-- READ SLIDE**

**-- Care-front with a hard, yet gentle conversation.**

**-- First, with ourselves.**

**-- Then, with other believers or those within our households.**

**-- With unbelievers, it would be because there is an actual or implied covenant, say, at work or an organization.**

**Let's take a moment of quiet to let the Spirit nudge each of us as we ask Him to show us . . . READ SLIDE (again).**